



## **And Now Iran We can't rule out the use of military force**

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An unrepentant rogue state with a history of sponsoring terrorists seeks to develop weapons of mass destruction. The United States tries to work with European allies to deal with the problem peacefully, depending on International Atomic Energy Agency inspections and United Nations sanctions. The Europeans are generally hesitant and wishful. Russia and China are difficult and obstructive. Eventually the reality of the threat, the obduracy of the rogue state regime in power, becomes too obvious to be ignored.

This is not a history lesson about Iraq. These are today's headlines about Iran, where the regime is openly pursuing its ambition to become a nuclear power. "But this time diplomacy has to be given a chance to work," the doves coo.

"Maybe this time Israel will take care of the problem," some hawks whisper. Both are being escapist.

Doves profess concern about Iran's nuclear program and endorse various diplomatic responses to it. But they don't want even to contemplate the threat of military action. Perhaps military action won't ultimately be necessary. But the only way diplomatic, political, and economic pressure has a chance to work over the next months is if the military option--or various military options--are kept on the table.

Meanwhile, some hawks, defenders of the Iraq war, would prefer to deal with one challenge at a time. They hope we can kick the can down the road a while longer, or that a deus ex machine--a Jewish one!--will ap-

pear to do our job for us. But great powers don't get to avoid their urgent responsibilities because they'd prefer to deal with only one problem at a time, or to slough those responsibilities off onto others. To be clear: We support diplomatic, political, and economic efforts to halt the nuclear program of the Iranian regime. We support multilateral efforts through the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations, and the assembling of coalitions of the willing, if necessary, to support sanctions and other forms of pressure. We support serious efforts to help democrats and dissidents in Iran, in the hope that regime change can be achieved without military action from the outside. We support strengthening our covert and intelligence capabilities. And we support holding open the possibility of, and beginning to prepare for, various forms of military action.

Many people--the *New York Times* editorial board, much of Europe, even some in the Bush administration--don't really believe a nuclear Iran is unacceptable. They're of course all for various multilateral efforts to persuade President Ahmadinejad and Hashemi Rafsanjani, head of Iran's Council of Expediency, as well as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to change their minds and abandon their nuclear ambitions. But the Times, and much of Europe, and some in the administration, don't really pretend that these attempts at persuasion are likely to work. At the end of the day, they think we can live with a nuclear Iran. After all, containment and de-

terrence worked with the Soviet Union; they could also work with Iran, one mid-level State Department official said in an unguarded moment in my presence a couple of months ago.

We don't agree--and we don't think President Bush does, either. A Cuban missile crisis with Khrushchev's Soviet Union was bad enough. Are we willing to risk it with Ahmadinejad's Iran? What about nuclear proliferation throughout the region? What about the hopes for a liberal, less-extremist-and-terror-friendly Middle East?

Advocates of containment and deterrence should step forward to make their case openly and honestly. We look forward to engaging them in a real debate. Right now, if you read the *Times* editorial page, or Timothy Garton Ash in the *London Guardian*, there's lots of talk about the unfortunate behavior of Iran, lots of urging of good-faith multilateral efforts--and lots of finger-wagging warnings against even thinking of military action. This isn't serious.

Others, fortunately, are more serious. The *Washington Post* editorial page, for one, endorses political and economic steps of real consequence, warns against letting diplomacy degenerate into appeasement, proposes to test the seriousness of our allies and nations like Russia and China--and refuses to rule out the threat of military action.

And President Bush and Condoleezza Rice are serious. They are

now speaking with new urgency, since the Iranian government is testing us, and its nuclear program could well be getting close to the point of no return. And they know that they have to speak with confidence and authority. Our adversaries cannot be allowed to believe

that, because some of the intelligence on Iraq was bad, or because the insurgency in Iraq has been difficult, we will be at all intimidated from taking the necessary steps against the current regime in Tehran.

